



Turkey's Europeanization

Author(s): H. Tarik Oğuzlu and Burak Bilgehan Özpek

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H. Tarık Oğuzlu & Burak Bilgehan Özpek Turkey's Europeanization

Turkey's presidential and parliamentary election processes in 2007 caused a debate over the nature of the country's Europeanization—its gradual adaptation to the EU's norms in domestic and foreign policy realms, as well as its secular modernization—in the course of the EU accession process. The debate revolves around the question of whether the Justice and Development party-led liberal-democratic reforms at home will result in Turkey's eventual membership in the EU—suggesting that Turkey's European identity would no longer be disputed at home or abroad—or whether Turkey will transform into a moderate Islamic country, where the increasing public salience of Islam will in the end erode the secular, unitary, and European character of the regime. This debate is currently unfolding at two levels, domestic and external. Domestically, the Justice and Development party (JDP) and its intellectual supporters have been confronting the traditional secular elites.¹

H. Tarık Oğuzlu is assistant professor at Bilkent University. Burak Bilgehan Özpek is a PhD candidate at Bilkent University.

¹ These are the politicians in the Republican People's party, the main secular opposition party in the parliament, and the members of the secular bureaucracy in state administration, mainly the military and the judiciary, as well as the politicians of traditional centre-right Motherland and True Path parties.

Externally, contending blocks of politicians and intellectuals in the European Union have been trying to assess the degree of Turkey's commitment to, as well as its readiness for, EU membership.

Recently, this debate intensified when Turkey's constitutional court agreed to hear the case filed against the JDP by the chief state judge. The judge wanted to ban the party, as well as its influential political members, on the grounds that they represented increasing threats to Turkey's secular character. High-level representatives of the European Union, including the head of the EU Commission and the commissioner in charge of enlargement process, have expressed their discomfort with this particular development and made it clear that European public opinion would find the idea of Turkey's governing party being closed down by the constitutional court odd (and indeed in the final verdict, the court argued it was the focal point of anti-secular activity, but did not ban it). On numerous occasions they have emphasized that secularism in Turkey should never justify the banning of political parties or the suspension of the democratization process.²

That said, this article argues that Turkey's decades-long Europeanization process might not be sustainable in the years to come, for two main reasons. First, the traditional supporters of this process in Turkey, mainly the secular elites, have recently adopted Euro-skeptic attitudes and become the champions of anti-EU sentiment. To the secular elites, JDP's support of Turkey's EU membership appears to be more tactical than strategic, in the sense that the continuation of the EU accession process has been considered by the JDP leadership to be vital for the party's ability to secure external and internal legitimacy in the eyes of its critics. This article underlines the point that absent the support of the secular elites for the Europeanization process, it is going to be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve Atatürk's goal to have Turkey become a part of contemporary civilization via inclusion in the EU. Second, the ongoing internal debate in Turkey seems to have weakened the hands of those in the EU who have thus far tried to justify Turkey's membership on the basis of normative grounds. Turkey's internal debate has been mirrored inside the EU in that a group of normative supporters of Turkey's accession, the so-called liberal cosmopolitanists, applauds Turkey's liberal democratization under the leadership of the JDP government, whereas the other group of normative supporters, the so-called traditionalists, shares the

2 The chair of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, stated that the democratic process should not be suspended for the sake of secularism, *Radikal*, 9 April 2008.

worries of Turkey's secular elites, yet at the same time fears the negative consequences of militarization in the name of protecting secularism.

Against such a background, we first analyze the dynamics of the ongoing debate in Turkey by paying particular attention to the concerns of the traditional secular elites about the intentions of the JDP, particularly with regard to Turkey's Islamization. Then an attempt will be made to highlight the growing schism between Turkey's normative supporters inside the EU. This article does not seek to examine the intentions and strategies of the JDP from its own perspective; such studies have been undertaken by others. Rather, the goal is to give a picture of the JDP-led developments in Turkey from the perspective of the traditional secular elites. The main conclusion is that the longer the ongoing debate inside Turkey remains unresolved—in other words, the longer contending blocks fail to reach a consensus on the need for Turkey to become both secular and liberal democratic—the more difficult it will be for the country's European supporters to justify their endorsement of Turkey's membership. Absent their support, European public opinion will likely remain Turkey-skeptic in future.

DOMESTIC DEBATE

The JDP-led government has accelerated the pace of Turkey's Europeanization reforms in recent years and the EU began accession talks with Turkey in late 2005. Institutionally, Turkey has come closer to the European Union than ever. Paradoxically, however, the degree of anti-EU feeling in Turkey has increased.³ One of the most important factors fuelling Euro-skepticism has been that such EU-led reforms have been undertaken by the political successor of the traditionally anti-European, anti-western political Islamists. Against the legacy of the political Islamist tradition in Turkey, the JDP's recent efforts to meet EU accession criteria at home and abroad have created confusion. The traditionally pro-western circles in Turkey, namely the secular elites, have been surprised to see the JDP turn into the greatest champion of liberal democracy in Turkey following its rise to power in November 2002. In the past, the leading figures of the party questioned Turkey's western connections—both the idea of liberal democracy and emerging strategic relations with Israel.

³ The co-chair of the Turkey-EU parliament commission, Joost Lagendijk, evaluated the JDP government as embodying Turkey's "golden years" in terms of the EU membership process, 7 April 2008, www.euractiv.com.tr; "Support for EU membership decreases," 7 September 2005, www.bbc.co.uk.

It seems that once the constitutional court banned the Welfare party, the predecessor of the JDP, in 1998 on the pretext of its nonsecular practices, and banned its leadership cadres from active politics, the word “democracy” gradually permeated the Islamists’ political discourse. When the young generation of the Islamist Welfare party founded the JDP in 2001, they built their political campaign on ideas of freedom of speech, freedom of consciousness, and freedom of opinion.⁴ Interestingly, while such figures as Abdullah Gül argued in the early 1990s that Turkey’s membership in the EU would amount to Turkey’s suicide, they have transformed into ardent supporters of Turkey’s accession to the EU in the 2000s.⁵

Despite all the counter-arguments of the JDP leadership, suspicions about the degree of the party’s commitment to secular democracy and liberalism have not abated. If the secular elites believed that JDP support for the EU accession process stemmed from an ideational perspective—seeing membership as the most important guarantee of Turkey’s secular western European identity—everything would have been fine. However, for many, this has not been the case.

The main criticism levelled against the JDP in this regard has been that the party has supported the EU-led democratization process from a pragmatic point of view in order to curb the political influence of the Turkish bureaucracy, particularly the Turkish military, the self-appointed guardian of Kemalist ideology in Turkey.⁶ The JDP’s critics assume that the EU-led democratization process would help create spaces for political Islamists to express their views more freely and to gain legitimacy in the

4 Feroz Ahmad, *Turkey: The Quest for Identity* (Bir Kimlik Pe inde Türkiye) (İstanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2006), 208-10.

5 Abdullah Gül expressed his opinions about European Union when he was a deputy of political Islamist Refah (Welfare) party in 1995 as follows: “It is apparent that Turkey will not be able to join European Union. Most prominent politicians of Europe say that. European philosophers say that the EU is the Union of Christians. The head of the European Commission, Delors, the British prime minister and all others say this. When the EU’s interests are concerned, Turkey is asked to give concessions, but when Turkey’s interests are concerned, the EU does not give any concession,” 19 December 2005, www.milliyet.com.tr; Abdullah Gül, “Türkiye niçin üye olmak istiyor?” (Why Turkey wants to be a member?), *Le Monde*, 26 September 2006.

6 Gamze Cavdar, “Islamist new thinking in Turkey: A model for political learning?” *Political Science Quarterly* 121, no. 3 (2006): 477-97.

eyes of the Turkish people. When the political Islamists had to leave the government in June 1997, after the military-orchestrated coup—the so-called 28th February process—they seem to have concluded that if they supported the EU-led liberal democratic reforms at home, they would not only have more maneuvering capability vis-à-vis other actors but would also be considered a legitimate player in Turkish politics. The JDP's critics have also wondered whether the ultimate goal of the party is to transform Turkey into an Islamic state via the EU accession process: after all, the public appearance of Islam would increase if conservative Islamists came to power through political elections. In this regard, the JDP's emphasis on the continuation of the accession *process*, rather than on *membership* itself, has helped perpetuate such fears.⁷

The JDP's approach to foreign policy has also come under serious attack. The main criticism has been that the JDP sees foreign policy as an instrument to curtail the domestic influence of the Turkish military. Supporting membership in the EU, revising Turkey's decades-old Cyprus policy, and adopting a more liberal approach towards the Kurds of northern Iraq in the image of the EU's foreign policy norms appeared to be well-calculated attempts on the part of the JDP government at delegitimizing the influential role of the Turkish military in decision-making processes. The goal has been to make it clear that it is the JDP government (politicians, not other actors, such as appointed bureaucrats) that is entitled to define Turkey's national interests.⁸

The secular elites, who have already had problems adapting to the changing foreign and security conceptualizations of the European Union in the post-Cold War era, reacted cautiously to JDP-led democratization. After all, the more the EU insists on Turkey's liberal democratization as the most important criterion for membership, the more the traditional primacy of military circles is contested. Increasing civilization would undoubtedly result in the demilitarization of policymaking processes. Furthermore, as the Europeanization process suggests the adoption of soft and civilian power instruments in the implementation of foreign and security policies, the military would no longer be able to build its undisputed legitimacy on hard power

7 Ilter Turan, "Unstable stability: Turkish politics at the crossroads," *International Affairs* 83, no. 2 (2007): 319-38.

8 Philip Robins, "Turkish foreign policy since 2002: Between a post-Islamist government and a Kemalist state," *International Affairs* 83, no. 2 (2007): 289-304.

instruments.⁹ Worse, the fear on the part of the secular elites has been that the JDP's instrumental adoption of EU-led liberal-democratic reforms would likely culminate in the erosion of Turkey's secular, homogenous, and unitary state identity, the sine qua non for the survival of the regime.¹⁰

Historically speaking, the founders of the Turkish republic in the early 1920s viewed the Europeanization process both as a path of internal modernization and a foreign and security policy strategy. The assumption was that Turkey would rid itself of its image as a potential enemy of the west once it joined Europe as an equal member of the western international community and was recognized as European by Europeans themselves. The Ottoman empire, of course, had come to an end at the hands of the European powers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. From this perspective, once Turkey became a truly European country, possibly following the confirmation of its EU membership, no one, at home or abroad, would dare challenge the indivisibility of Turkish borders and the homogenous/secular character of the Turkish state. Therefore, any suggestion that Turkey turn its face away from the west has long been regarded as threatening by the traditional secular elites. The new Turkish republic aligned its foreign policy with those of the European great powers before World War II and with NATO during the Cold War era. Turkey's geostrategic and military contribution to European security earned it a legitimate place in the west and in Europe.¹¹

The aspiration to become a member of the European family of nations also offers the main incentive for the secularization process to take root at home. The faster Turkey transforms into a European state in social and political aspects, the sooner Islam ceases to be a danger to the secular foundation of the republic. The expectation was that alongside the Europeanization and modernization process, the individualization and privatization of Islam would gradually occur. This would suggest that religion would become an issue between God and the believer. Objective secularization, which can be defined as the separation of state and religion from each other, would grad-

9 Fuat Keyman, "AKP ve dış politika" (JDP and foreign policy), *Radikal*, 28 September 2003.

10 Ole Wæver, "The EU as a security actor: Reflections from a pessimistic constructivist on post-sovereign security order," in Charles A. Kupchan, ed., *Atlantic Security: Contending Visions* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1998), 45-63.

11 H. Tarık Oğuzlu, "Turkey and the European Union: The security dimension," *Contemporary Security Policy* 23, no. 3 (2002): 61-82.

ually result in subjective secularization, which can be defined as the individualization of religion.¹² The goal of the reforms that the founders of the republic undertook with zeal was to usher such developments into existence as quickly as possible. The transformation of Turkey into a more conservative Islamic country alongside the Europeanization process would have been the last thing that the founders of the republic would have wanted.

In contrast to the Cold War years, the 1990s increasingly led the EU to doubt Turkey's European and western identity. Diverging security conceptualizations of the EU and Turkey have played significant roles in this regard. Not only has the absence of the Soviet threat helped dilute Turkey's security role in the context of continental Europe, but the increasing importance of the Middle East in global power politics has resulted in a reluctant European attitude towards Turkey's possible EU membership. Turkey's proximity to the Hobbesian security environment in the Middle East has resulted in European public opinion's reluctance to see Turkey as part of the EU's Kantian security environment.

Besides, as liberal pluralist democracy has gradually shaped the EU's internal identity and enlargement policies, Turkey's growing democracy deficit in the 1990s helped to perpetuate its non-European identity. Furthermore, as the EU accession process eased the EU's involvement in Turkey's internal affairs, the so-called Sèvres syndrome has begun to haunt the traditional security elites in Ankara. The elites fear that just as European support to nationalist independence movements in the Balkans in the late 19th and early 20th centuries accelerated the dismemberment of the Ottoman empire, a similar process might repeat itself if the EU accession process results in Turkey's decentralization and federalization in the image of the EU's constitutive norms.¹³ Such concerns on the part of the traditional elites have become more acute during the reign of the JDP government since 2002. This has happened for a number of reasons.

First, the number of people who define their personal identity with reference to Islam has increased. In response to a poll asking how they would define their identity, a substantial number of Turks responded that they were first Muslim, and then Turk. More dramatically, the number of women who

12 Fuat Keyman, "Modernity, secularism and Islam: The case of Turkey," *Theory, Culture & Society* 24, no. 2 (2007): 215-34.

13 Ersel Aydınli, Nihat Ali Özcan, and Doğan Akyaz, "Turkey's military march toward Europe," *Foreign Affairs* 85, no. 1 (2005): 424-35.

wear the turban (as the modern headscarf is called) increased during the first JDP term in government between 2003 and 2007. While 56.3 percent of the women living in urban areas were wearing the turban in 2003, that number rose to 69.4 percent in 2007.¹⁴ This refers to not only the political but also the sociological Islamization of Turkey.

Second, the majority of municipalities are under JDP rule following the local elections in 2003. Policies such as the creation of alcohol-free spaces within the boundaries of municipalities have raised suspicions as to the intentions of the JDP.¹⁵

Third, the JDP's pro-Islamic foreign policy abroad has also been seen by secular elites as facilitating the process of Islamization at home. The JDP openly supported the Hamas-led government in the Palestinian territories and has tried to forge closer relations with the Sunni Arabic community in Iraq. Similarly, the government has increasingly emphasized Turkey's Ottoman past and Islamic identity with a view to attracting as much Arabic capital as possible.¹⁶

Fourth, the JDP government's selective and discriminatory approach towards the issue of appointments within the state bureaucracy has also fuelled doubts. For example, men whose wives cover their heads have had more success in being appointed to influential positions within the state apparatus than those whose wives are uncovered. Similarly, the speaker of the previous Turkish parliament, Bülent Arınc, who is also a member of the Justice and Development party, stirred a political crisis when he argued that the next president of the republic, succeeding Ahmet Necdet Sezer, should be a religious person.¹⁷ This led the secular elites to conclude that the political Islamists have never given up their old strategy of transforming society in the image of Islam from above.

¹⁴ Ali Çarkoğlu and Binnaz Toprak, *Değişen Türkiye'de Din, Toplum ve Siyaset* (Religion, Society and Politics in a changing Turkey) (Istanbul: Tesev Yayınları, 2006), 40; Tahran Erdem, "Turban, secularism, and religion in daily life," *Milliyet*, 12 March 2007.

¹⁵ Michael Rubin, "Will Turkey have an Islamist president?" *Middle Eastern Outlook*, AEI online, 2 February 2002.

¹⁶ Robins, "Turkish foreign policy."

¹⁷ The "turban" refers to the modern style of headscarf. While the traditional headscarf is peculiar to the Anatolian village people, the turban is worn by young girls in towns. Many Turks believed that the main reason that Durmuş Yılmaz was appointed president of the Turkish central bank was that his wife wears the turban. See also "We will elect a religious president," 16 April 2007, www.hurriyet.com.tr.

Fifth, Arinc and many others in the JDP suggested that secularism in Turkey should be redefined so as to make it more congruent with liberal democracy. The bone of contention here is that while the secular elites see secularism as the most important mechanism preventing religion from shaping politics and state administration, as well as keeping religion a personal affair, the JDP and its sympathizers tend to define secularism as freedom of conscience and religious practice, as well as the state's impartiality before different faiths. It also holds that all religious establishments should administer their own affairs independently of state interference.¹⁸

Sixth, Prime Minister Erdoğan reopened the Kurdish question by announcing in 2005 that Turkey had a specific Kurdish problem, in addition to PKK terrorism, and that the main reason for this was the way Turkish citizenship is defined in the constitution. To him, the word "Turk" appears to denote a specific ethnic group, as does the word "Kurd." He preferred the word "Türkiyeli" as an umbrella term under which different ethnic groups in Turkey would presumably feel comfortable.¹⁹ The JDP elites have also assigned Islam a cementing role that could unite Turks and Kurds better than a secular vision of citizenship.

Secular elites objected to this understanding by arguing that Turkey does not have any Kurdish problem defined in ethnic terms, but only the problem of PKK-terrorism. They also argued that the word "Turk" is not an ethnic-exclusive term but includes all ethnic groups who happen to live in Turkey. Using the word Turk in an ethnic sense would bring nothing but further chaos and possible territorial dismemberment of the country in the future. The accusation levelled against the JDP has been that the latter seems to have adopted the EU's approach towards minorities, according to which they can be classified across ethnic, religious, and linguistic criteria, and all minorities should be given positive group rights rather than negative individual rights. That said, the secular elites have doggedly referred to the Lausanne treaty of 1924 to justify their claim that Turkey recognizes only non-Muslim groups as minorities.²⁰

18 "Secularism should be redefined," 26 April 2006, www.milliyet.com.tr.

19 Ioannis N. Grigoriadis, "Turk or Türkiyeli? The reform of Turkey's minority legislation and the rediscovery of Ottomanism," *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 3 (2007): 423-38.

20 Baskin Oran, *Türkiye'de Azınlıklar: Kavramlar, Lozan, İç Mevzuat, İċti̇hat, Uygulama* (Minorities in Turkey: Concepts, Lozan, Internal Regulations, Interpretation, Implementation). (Istanbul: Tesev Yayınları, 2004).

Finally, the JDP's approach to the Cyprus dispute has increased anxieties on the part of the secular elites. They find the JDP's Cyprus policy too reconciliatory towards the demands of the European Union. To them, Turkey should have clung to its decades-old Cyprus policy, according to which there exist two independent states on the island, namely the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and the Greek Cypriot administration; the resolution of the Cyprus dispute within the EU accession process would be unfair because the EU is not a neutral actor in this process; the accession of the island to the EU prior to Turkey's membership would be illegal because according to the 1960 treaties, which founded Cyprus as an independent state, the island can never join an international organization in which Greece and Turkey are not equally represented; and, finally, it is the Greek Cypriots who have thus far prevented the unification of the island in a confederal or loose federal architecture.

The JDP's Cyprus policy, meanwhile, appears to have envisaged the resolution of the dispute within the framework of the EU-supported Annan plan. The JDP seems to accept that Turkey's membership in the EU and the resolution of the Cyprus dispute are closely interrelated. The assumption is that if Turkey contributes to the resolution of the dispute, the obstacles before Turkey's accession would evaporate. Given that the Greek Cypriots did not vote for the Annan plan but were admitted to the EU as a full member, that the EU has not thus far kept its promise of easing the trade sanctions and embargo on the Turkish Cypriots as part of its goal to reward the cooperative stance of the Turkish Cypriots prior to the Annan plan, that the EU asked Turkey to recognize the Republic of Cyprus as the only sovereign power on the island, and that the EU partially froze the accession talks with Turkey in late 2006 due to Turkey's refusal to extend its customs union agreement with the EU to Cyprus, the secular-nationalist forces now vociferously argue that Turkey has gained nothing by revising its old Cyprus policy.²¹

Apart from these developments, the concerns of the secular elites over Turkey's transformation into a more conservative Islamic country increased with the election of the new Turkish president in 2007. The people who argued vehemently against the election of Abdullah Gül, the JDP's nominee, had two main concerns in mind. The first pertained to how Turkey would be perceived abroad if Abdullah Gül became the Turkish president. With a first

21 Ayşe Aslıhan Çelenk, "The restructuring of Turkey's policy towards Cyprus: The Justice and Development party's struggle for power," *Turkish Studies* 8, no. 3 (2007): 349-63.

lady whose head is covered by a turban, Turkey's image as a Middle Eastern Arabic country might be strengthened at the expense of its western, European image. This would certainly be counter to the foundational logic of a secular Turkish republic.

The second concern was that the constitution endows the Turkish president with significant rights and privileges. Given that the presidential position is seen by many as the guarantor of Turkey's secular identity, as well as the harmonious relationship among different state institutions, the occupation of this position by an ex-political Islamist might weaken the hands of the so-called secular circles in state administration. The 1982 constitution gives the president the right to appoint the members of the constitutional court, the higher education councils, the rectors of universities, the court of cassation, and the state investigation council. If a member of the JDP occupied the presidency, the control of the governing party over academia and judiciary would certainly increase. With the presidency gone, who would be able to check the rising influence of the JDP-led government and parliament? The principle of separation of powers, a *sine qua non* for representative democracy and constitutional liberalism, might be in danger if the JDP took full control of the executive and legislative branches of government. This would likely catapult the judiciary to the position of the last bastion of Turkey's secular identity.

The fact that the JDP's approach to democracy appears to have been proven to be more majoritarian than pluralist over the last five years has also sharpened the anxieties of the traditional secular elites. The JDP leadership has not always sought consensus or been restrained in its use of power during its first tenure in government, and it has seen the practice of building consensus as the subordination of the majority view to the minority's, which is not in accord with European norms.²²

Recent socioeconomic developments in the country have further led the secular elites to the view that Turkey is undergoing an Islamization process. In Turkey, the state has always been the main economic actor since the establishment of the republic, despite Prime Minister Turgut Özal's liberalization measures in the 1980s. The JDP government has not been an exception: public expenditures have increased by approximately 70 percent during the party's time in power, boosted by its control of 54 municipalities out of 80.²³

22 Speeches of Erdoğan, www.sondakika.com.

23 Undersecretariat of foreign trade, 30 January 2008, www.dtm.gov.tr; Mustafa Aysan, "Ekonomi'de son çeyrek" (The economy's last quarter), *Radikal*, 3 October 2007.

While increasing state expenditures and decreasing inflation have enabled the party to gain the loyalty of the upper and middle classes, social policies implemented by municipalities have earned the party the support of lower income groups. For example, the government has helped to subsidize lower income groups through its social aid programs while avoiding the rules of the free market economy. The practice of distributing food and coal to the poor people of Anatolia and metropolitan cities, who are conservative and value Islam in their daily life, contradicts the logic of the free market economy. Seven and a half million Turks out of a population of 70 million were subsidized by the government between 2003 and 2007. The cost of government subsidies was 652 million Turkish lira in 2003 and had increased to 1.413 billion Turkish lira by 2007.²⁴

Through the economic policies of the JDP, Anatolian-based businessmen have prospered. This matters because while Turkey's traditional Istanbul-based bourgeoisie wholeheartedly believes in the European ideal and supports Turkey's membership in the EU, the Anatolian-based new bourgeoisie does not have any particular interest in EU membership. Instead, it appears to value the positive impact that the continuation of the EU accession process might have on Turkey's political and economic stability, a precondition for the success of its export-oriented businesses. Because this new bourgeoisie adheres to conservative values, its recent prosperity might suggest that Turkey has somehow transformed into a more socially conservative country.²⁵ Islam has gained a more observable social status with its increased wealth.

What is also noteworthy in this regard is that while the weight of European capital in business interactions of the Istanbul-based Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association—TUSIAD—has increased, the members of MUSIAD, the business association that many consider the traditional supporters of the JDP, have begun to work with non-European, mainly Arabic, capital. In contrast to TUSIAD, the members of MUSIAD tend to believe in the principles of solidarity and Islamic brotherhood in economic life, and argue that Turkey's opening to the Middle Eastern and Arab

24 Rıfat Başaran, "Yardıma muhtaç toplum" (The society that depends on help), *Radikal*, 10 May 2008.

25 Ziya Öniş, "The political economy of Islam and democracy in Turkey: From the Welfare party to the AKP," in Dietrich Jung, ed., *Democracy and Development: New Political Strategies for the Middle East* (New York: Palgrave, 2006).

capitals would certainly serve Turkey's economy better than other options.²⁶ The latest statistics reveal that Turkey's trade with Middle Eastern countries, particularly the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, has increased tremendously, and the percentage of Islamic capital invested in Turkey now approaches European levels.²⁷ The fact that the Turkish economy has begun to integrate with global Arab capital might lead observers to conclude that Turkey's non-European identity has been strengthened during the reign of the JDP.

All these factors appear to suggest that one group of elites, raised in a western lifestyle and eager to become part of European civilization, is now being replaced by another group of elites accustomed to traditional Islamic norms. It is the manifestation of a transitional period that has led the traditional secular elites to doubt the legitimacy as well as intentions of the JDP.

THE VIEW FROM EUROPE: CONFUSING MINDS ABROAD

Europeans appear to be at odds as to how to interpret the debate on secularism and democracy in Turkey. While some are optimistic about the extent of the reforms undertaken by the JDP and think that Turkey has recently come closer to the EU than ever in terms of democratization, others believe that the masses who took to the streets to protest the JDP's policies on secularism prior to the presidential elections in 2007 are the true believers of Europeanization in Turkey and are now in the minority. The odd thing here is that while the secular elites have increased their criticism of the JDP's policies on the ground that they ran counter to the logic of Turkey's decades-old Europeanization process, an increasing number of Europeans have begun to view those same secular elites as the potential inhibitors of Turkey's EU accession, for they appear to believe that the military's involvement in politics is legitimate insofar as Turkey's unitary and secular state identity is at risk.²⁸

Excluding the particular EU circles that are traditionally against Turkey's accession to the EU on the ground of inherent religious, cultural, historical, and geographical differences between two sides (the categorical rejectionists), Europeans who support Turkey's membership can be divided into two groups. While the materialist supporters tend to refer to the positive impacts

26 Ayşe Buğra, "The claws of the 'tigers'," *Privateview*, autumn 1997.

27 Foundation of Foreign Investment, July 2007, www.yased.org.tr.

28 Walter Posch, "Crisis in Turkey: Just another bump on the road to Europe?" *European Union Institute for Security Studies*, occasional paper 67, June 2007.

that Turkey's accession would have on the EU's economic and security interests, the normative supporters argue that Turkey should be let in if it meets the Copenhagen criteria and adopts the EU's secular and multicultural norms.

The real argument is among the normative supporters, for both the categorical rejectionists and the materialist supporters take comfort in arguing against or for Turkey's membership in the EU on the basis of observable material factors. While the categorical rejectionists are somehow fixated on the legitimacy of their arguments and appear not to be affected by internal developments in Turkey, materialist supporters offer many factors in favour of Turkey's membership. They cite, for example, Turkey's geopolitical location, sophisticated military capabilities, growing domestic market, transit routes to the gas and oil resources of the Caspian and central Asian regions to European markets, and talented young population in their efforts to justify its accession to the EU. Materialist supporters take the EU's own interests as the starting point of their analysis and try to assess Turkey's contribution to the materialization of such interests on the basis of cost-benefit calculations. Recently, another argument that has become fashionable is that the membership of a "moderate Islamic" country in the EU would not only facilitate the transformation of Muslims in Europe into European Muslims but would also help the EU reach out to the Islamic world in a cost-effective way. Turkey's membership would also suggest that the EU is not a solely Christian entity and the idea of clash of civilizations as predicted by Huntington is not predestined.²⁹

The normative supporters, on the other hand, pay close attention to the nature of Turkey's internal transformation. All normative supporters share the views that democracy and secularism are the EU's constitutive norms and that Turkey's Islamic character is not a priori an obstacle to its adoption of the EU's norms, for the EU is not a geographical or cultural project but a political one built on the universality of secular and multicultural norms. Turkey's membership is not a question of *if* but *when*.³⁰ However, normative supporters are not a monolithic unit and can be divided into two groups.

29 Helene Sjursen, "Why expand? The question of legitimacy and justification in the EU's enlargement policy," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40, no. 9, no. 3 (2002): 491-513.

30 Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, "Negotiating Europe: The politics of religion and the prospects for Turkish accession," *Review of International Studies* 32, no. 3 (2006): 401-18.

The *traditionalists* have long believed that the path of modernization that Atatürk set into motion in the early 20th century would gradually help Turkey become a secular European country. In this view, the modernization of the Turkish society from above, despite its semi-democratic character, would not contradict the EU's secular norms, for this top-down modernization process would help create a large middle class in Turkey that would gradually adopt secularism in all aspects of life. If Turks succeeded in privatizing religion, Turkey would likely join the EU and the EU would not face the risk of being Islamized following Turkey's accession. Traditionalists do at least understand, if not tolerate, domestic efforts in the name of protecting Turkey's secular identity. As far as they are concerned, if secularism is not entrenched, Turkey can never become a truly democratic country. They welcomed, for example, the ruling of the European court of human rights that the decision of Turkey's constitutional court to ban the turban in public places in 2005—most notably in universities—did not breach European norms. In the same vein, European Commission member Louis Michel pointed to secularism as a common value held by Turkey and the EU, asking what kind of youth the EU wants to see in Turkey: modern or fundamentalist?³¹

These European circles have long cooperated with Turkey's traditional secular elites against common external enemies and have seen the elites as the bastion of European values in Turkey. For example, when Erbakan's Welfare party looked poised to win parliamentary elections in 1995, the traditionalists hailed Tansu Ciller, leader of the True Path party, as Turkey's modern and European face and preferred that her party win, lest the Welfare party trigger Turkey's transformation into an Islamizing country. That is why the European parliament, however reluctantly, approved the customs union agreement with Turkey in December 1995. The goal was to increase the likelihood of Ciller's party winning the elections.³²

These circles seem also cognizant of the fact that European public opinion has recently become less tolerant towards Muslims. Given that Islam is now seen by many Europeans as the *other* against which the EU should define its international identity, Turkey's appearance as an Islamizing country

31 "Michel: Türkiye aB üyesi olmalı" (Michel: Turkey should be an EU member), 31 May 2007, www.abhaber.com.

32 Cynthia Hanson, and Abraham T. McLaughlin, "The European parliament approved a customs union between Turkey and the EU," *Christian Science Monitor* 88, no. 14 (1995): 2.

would certainly diminish its chances of membership.³³ Such Europeans as Ségolène Royal therefore see the people who participated in the street demonstrations in the spring of 2007 as the true representatives of the European way of life in Turkey.³⁴ They identified with urbanized middle-class women when the latter thought that another five-year rule of the JDP, together with a JDP figure becoming the next president, would endanger their secular way of life. A similar reaction came from the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, a European parliament group that underlines the indispensability of secularism for any modern state. Lale Akgün, a member of the Social Democrats in the federal German parliament, stated that Europeans are against Turkey's membership because they do not want a union with Turks who do not respect the rights of women, have sharpened religious attitudes, and wear turbans and takke.³⁵

What makes the picture seem more complicated for the traditionalists is that even though the Turks who joined the street protests are socially European in terms of lifestyle, they appear to be non-European in terms of political behaviour, for they are predisposed to see the military involvement in politics as legitimate whenever Turkey's Kemalist underpinnings are in jeopardy.

Another group of normative supporters, the liberal-cosmopolitanists, does believe that the prospects of Turkey's accession to the EU have increased since the JDP came to government in 2002 and argue that liberal-democratic reforms undertaken during this era attest to this. These people assume that the JDP is not an obstacle in the way of Turkey's transformation into a secular state because the JDP knows that Turkey can never join the secular EU if it is Islamized. These circles tend to equate the JDP with Christian Democratic parties across Europe and see no clear evidence suggesting that the JDP has set into motion a radical Islamization project at home. Instead, the radical undertones of the so-called political Islamists have to a signifi-

33 Lauren M. McLaren, "Explaining opposition to Turkish membership in the EU," *European Union Politics* 8, no. 2 (2007): 251-78.

34 French politician Ségolène Royal has criticized Sarkozy's Turkey policy, and has argued that we cannot close the doors on people who defend secularism by democratic ways, 4 May 2007, www.gazetevatan.com.

35 "Adım adım avrupa: Almanya 1" (Step-by-step Europe: Germany I), 10 December 2004, www.bbc.co.uk.

cant degree softened over the last years. Olli Rehn, the commissar responsible for EU enlargement, for example, has said that JDP is a post-Islamist party, very close to the Christian Democrats in Europe.³⁶

These circles have grown optimistic about Turkey's secularization during the reign of the JDP rule, for Turks have moved to the sociological centre and are well off economically. The argument is that the richer people become and the more they integrate with the world, the more privatized Islam in Turkey will be. Socioeconomic developments over the last years have strengthened the roots of a secular lifestyle. These circles also argue that Turkey's membership would prove that the EU is a multicultural area embodying the principle of unity in diversity, and beneficial to the EU in terms of its image in the Middle East.³⁷

Even though liberal-cosmopolitanists support Turkey's membership on the basis of the Copenhagen criteria, they have recently grown suspicious of some JDP policies, such as defining adultery as a crime in Turkish penal code, banning the sale of alcohol within the borders of some JDP-led governed municipalities, and insisting on women's right to wear the turban in public offices and universities.

Normative supporters of both stripes have to wrestle with how to adopt a balanced view towards Turkey's secular character on the one hand and the liberal-democratization process on the other. There is no ambiguity in the minds of the normative supporters that the EU consists of member states that are both secular and democratic at the same time. However, when it comes to Turkey, it seems that traditionalists prioritize secularism over democracy whereas the liberal-cosmopolitanists prioritize democracy over secularism as the most important precondition for Turkey's EU accession. The traditionalists' dilemma arises from the possibility of Turkey's militarization in the name of protecting secularism, whereas the liberals' dilemma stems from the possibility of Turkey's Islamization in the name of democratization. The risk here is that in the absence of the normative supporters soon reaching a consensus on the indispensability of Turkey's democratic and secular identity, and sending messages to Turkey accordingly, either mil-

36 "Rehn: AKP korkusu abartılıyor" (Rehn: Fear of JDP is exaggerated), *Radikal*, 31 May 2007, www.radikal.com.tr.

37 Hugh Pope, "Turkey and Europe: The way ahead," International Crisis Group report 184, 2007.

itarization or Islamization would likely result in Turkey's perennial estrangement from the EU.

CONCLUSION

In recent years, traditional secular elites and JDP circles in Turkey have united around the goal of membership in the EU. Secular elites have tolerated the political influence of the JDP because of the beginning of accession talks with the EU. Otherwise, it is unimaginable that the Turkish army would have acquiesced in the weakening of its political and institutional prerogatives. The continuation of the accession process has continued to encourage Turkey's political actors to avoid their differences and seek consensus.

However, it seems that despite the formal start of accession talks in late 2005, skepticism towards Turkey's accession to the union has increased. Both the German Merkel government and the French Sarkozy government are arguing for Turkey's attachment to the EU through a privileged partnership, rather than full membership. Sarkozy even maintains that Turkey should be included in the Mediterranean union rather than the EU.³⁸ Those who argue against Turkey's membership due to identity-related concerns, namely the categorical rejectionists, have been gradually gaining ground. Worse, materialist supporters have recently begun to view Turkey's transformation into a moderate Islamic country as being in the security interests of the European Union. However, this particular European perception of Turkey's emerging identity has proven enough for alarm bells to ring across the Turkish capital. The more the EU values Turkey's success in combining Islam and democracy in its fight against radical Islam, the more anxious the traditional secular elites have become. Furthermore, the ascendancy of the "political right" across European countries will likely make it more difficult, if not impossible, for normative supporters to press for Turkey's accession to the EU.

Another discouraging development is that owing to the growing confusion about Turkey's identity at home and abroad, structural transformation in the country alongside the EU accession process has slowed recently. It is in this context that several human rights crises have transpired: in the last two years, some intellectuals, including Nobel prize winner Orhan Pamuk,

38 Nikolas Sarkozy, "Liberté, fraternité and modernité?" *National Interest*, July-August, 2007, 14-15.

have been sued on the grounds of “insulting Turkishness,” as defined in the article 301 of the Turkish penal code.

As for the future, this article holds that if the growing confusion in the EU culminates in the adoption of a reluctant attitude towards Turkey’s possible accession, the most likely scenario will be that the secular elites will consider the JDP-led liberaldemocratization process at home a threat to the Kemalist foundational logic of the country. After all, what is the point of undertaking all these reforms if the EU increasingly views Turkey unfit for the membership? The longer the confusion and ambiguity about Turkey continues both at home and abroad, the likelier it is that consensus between the JDP and the traditional secular elites will collapse.